COUNCIL MEETING, JANUARY 25, 1940

Attention was called to a postscript on a letter from President Roscoe C. Cox of the Hawaiian Mission, calling attention to a recommendation he had received for ordination of two boys to the office of Deacon, the mother of these boys having some Negro blood in her veins.

President Clark explained that this matter has come up at various times in the past, that is the question of what should be done with those people who are faithful in the Church who are supposed to have some Negro blood in their veins.

President Clark said at his request the clerk of the Council had copied from the old records of the Council discussions that have been had in the past on this subject. He said that he was positive that it was impossible with reference to the Brazilians to tell those who have Negro blood and those who have not, and we are baptizing these people into the Church. The question also arises pertaining to the people in South Africa where we are doing missionary work, and in the Southern States, also in the islands of the Pacific.

President Clark suggested that this matter be referred to the Twelve who might appoint a sub-committee to go into the matter with great care and make some ruling or re-affirm whatever ruling has been made on this question in the past as to whether or not one drop of negro blood deprives a man of the right to receive the priesthood.

Brother Widtsoe moved the adoption of President Clark's suggestion.

Motion seconded and unanimously approved.

COUNCIL MEETING, THURSDAY, AUGUST 22, 1895

President Woodruff informed the Council that Sister Jane James, a negress of long standing in the Church, had asked him for permission to receive her endowments, and that he and his counselors had told her that they could see no way by which they could accede to her wishes; and they asked the brethren present if they had any ideas on the subject favorable to her race.

President Joseph F. Smith told of Brother Abel having been ordained a Seventy and afterwards a High Priest at Kirtland under the direction of the Prophet Joseph Smith.

President Cannon remarked that the Prophet Joseph taught this doctrine: That the seed of Cain could not receive the Priesthood nor act in any of the offices of the priesthood until the seed of Abel should come forward and take precedence over Cain's offspring; and that any white man who mingled his seed with that of Cain should be killed, and thus prevent any of the seed of Cain's coming into possession of the priesthood.

Brother George F. Gibbs, the secretary, reminded President Woodruff of a Sister Smith, whose first husband was a man named Berry, by whom she had two children -- girls -- who are now living, and it is held by those who knew Berry that he had negro blood in him. She separated from Berry and married a man named Smith who is not in the Church and by whom she had one child, a boy, that she now desires to be sealed to her second husband for whom her son will stand proxy, but that

COUNCIL MEETING, THURSDAY, AUGUST 22, 1895 - Continued

President Angus M. Cannon had refused to sign her recommend to the temple for the reason that she had married a man with negro blood in him and borne him children, and she had appealed to the First Presidency to have President Angus M. Cannon's action overruled, denying at the same time that her first husband was part negro.

It being understood that Mr. Berry was part negro, President Cannon raised the question: What would become of the girls? One at least of whom was in the Church, as they could not be admitted to the temple, and he thought it would be unfair to admit their mother and deny them this privilege. President Cannon thought too that to let down the bars in the least on this question would only tend to complications, and that it is perhaps better to let all such cases alone, believing, of course, that the Lord would deal fairly with them all.

President Woodruff assented to this.

COUNCIL MEETING, DECEMBER 15, 1897

A letter from Elder Francis M. Lyman was read, dated at Vanceburg, Kentucky, 5th Instant, enclosing a letter from Elder S. P. Oldham, who asked Brother Lyman the following question, and Brother Lyman forwarded it to be answered by the First Presidency:

"Can a man (white) be permitted to receive the priesthood, who has a wife who is either black or is tainted with negro blood?"

President Cannon said he had understood President Taylor to say that a man who had the priesthood who would marry a woman of the accursed seed, that if the law of the Lord were administered upon him, he would be killed, and his offspring, for the reason that the Lord had determined that the seed of Cain should not receive the priesthood in the flesh; and that this was the penalty put upon Cain, because if he had received the priesthood the seed of the murderer would get ahead of the seed of Abel who was murdered. The point, President Cannon said, which President Taylor sought to make was that if a white man who had received the priesthood should have children by a negro woman, he could go back and act for his dead ancestors on his wife's side, and he therefore thought it would be improper for a man, as for instance the case referred to, to receive the priesthood for the reasons assigned as being those given by President Taylor.

While there was no formal action taken, this seemed to be the mind of the Council, President Snow adding that the way might be opened for the man referred to in the case under consideration to get a divorce from his present wife and marry a white woman, and he would then be entitled to the priesthood.

COUNCIL MEETING, MARCH 11, 1900

Letter from Ira N. Hinckley read, stating that a man in Oasis named Church had received his patriarchal blessing in which he was told that he was of the lineage of Ephraim and that he should receive the priesthood and go on a mission. But it is understood that he inherits some negro blood in him through his mother, and questions were being asked about the right of this party to hold the priesthood, some holding that he might do so provided the white blood predominates.

President Snow, commenting on this subject, said that he asked President Brigham Young on one occasion why it was that millions and millions of people were cursed with a black skin, and when, if ever, this curse would be removed? President Young

COUNCIL MEETING, MARCH 11, 1900 - Continued

explained it to him in this way, but whether the President had had this revealed to him or not he did not know, or whether he was giving his own personal views of what had been told him by the Prophet Joseph. He said that when Cain slew Abel he fully understood that the effects would not end with the killing of his brother, but that it extended to the spirits in eternity. He said that in the spirit world people were organized as they are here. There were patriarchs standing at the head of certain classes of spirits, and there were certain relationships existing which affected their coming into the world to take tabernacles; as, for instance, when Abel came into the world it was understood by Cain that the class of people he presided over as a prince, if they ever came into the world in the regular way, they would have to come thru him. So with Cain, he was a prince presiding over a vast number of a certain class of spirits, and it was natural that they should come through him, if at all, and therefore when Cain slew Abel he understood that the taking of his brother's life was going to deprive the spirits over whom he presided from coming into the world, perhaps for thousands and thousands of years; hence the sin was immense because the effects were immense. Then there was this understanding when the Lord executed judgment upon Cain; the spirits under his leadership still looked up to him, and rather than forsake him they were willing to bear his burdens and share the penalty imposed upon him. This was understood when the curse was pronounced upon him, and it was understood that this curse would remain upon his posterity until the class of spirits presided over by Abel should have the privilege of coming into the world and taking tabernacles, and then the curse would be removed.

President Cannon remarked upon this subject, as he said, he had on a prior occasion when this subject was under consideration, that he had understood that the Prophet Joseph had said during his lifetime, that there would be a great wrong perpetrated if the seed of Cain were allowed to have the Priesthood before Abel should have posterity to receive it, and this curse therefore was to remain upon the seed of Cain until the time should come that Abel should have posterity. He understood that that time could not come until Abel should beget spirits in the eternal worlds and those spirits obtain tabernacles; if it were otherwise the slayer would have advantage over the slain. President Cannon further remarked that it would seem that there was a class of spirits who had to take such bodies for the reason that Ham introduced this blood through the ark by marrying a woman of the accursed seed named Egyptus.

SATURDAY, AUGUST 18, 1900

Presidents Snow, Cannon, and Smith at the office.

Letter read from President Ben E. Rich, conveying information that the President of the South Carolina Conference, C. R. Humphreys, had accidentally run across a village of negroes who were members of our Church and that two of the males had been ordained to the priesthood by the elder (Bond) who had baptized them, and Elder Humphreys wanted to know what should be done about this. The question was now considered.

President Cannon informed President Snow that President Young had held to the doctrine that no man tainted with negro blood was eligible to the priesthood; that President Taylor held to the same doctrine, claiming to have been taught it by the Prophet Joseph Smith. President Cannon read from the Pearl of Great Price showing that negroes were debarred from the priesthood; also that Enoch in his day called upon all people to repent save it were

SATURDAY, AUGUST 18, 1900 - Continued

the descendants of Cainan.

President Snow intimated to President Cannon that this was one of the questions which it was understood would come up before the Council of First Presidency and Apostles for discussion the first time there should be a full attendance.

President Cannon remarked to President Snow that as he regarded it the subject was really beyond the pale of discussion, unless, he, President Snow, had light to throw upon what had already been imparted.

Brother Gibbs now reminded President Cannon that President Smith had on a previous occasion related something going to show how the full blooded negro came through the flood which had not to his knowledge appeared in our records, and suggested that President Smith be asked to repeat it.

Upon being invited to do so President Smith said that he had been told that the idea originated with the Prophet Joseph, but of course he could not vouch for it. It was this: That the woman named Egyptus was in the family way by a man of her own race before Ham took her to wife, and that Cainan was the result of that illicit intercourse.

This subject was now dropped without President Snow intimating that the subject would be further considered.

THURSDAY, JANUARY 2, 1902

Brother Clawson reporting his visit to Sevier Stake said that while at Richfield he learned that a young man had married a woman who was one-quarter negro, and now that one of his sons is about to marry, his intended wife wanted to know if the fact of his having inherited negro blood would be a bar to his receiving the priesthood and endowments.

President Smith in replying to this question said that Presidents Young and Taylor were emphatic in denying to any person receiving the priesthood or endowments who had negro blood in their veins, and he further said that a man named Abel, an octoroon, and who had married a quadroon, applied to President Young for his endowments, he having been ordained a Seventy and received his patriarchal blessing in the days of the Prophet Joseph, but President Young put him off, and that Brother Abel failed to get his wish gratified by the President. It appeared that a promise was made to him in his patriarchal blessing to the effect that he should be the welding link between the black and white races, and that he should hold the initiative authority by which his race should be redeemed. He renewed his application to receive his endowments time after time to President Taylor, who at last submitted it to this Council, resulting in a decision unfavorable to Brother Abel. After his death the wife of Isaac James (known as Aunt Jane) asked to receive her own endowments and to be sealed; but President Woodruff, Cannon, and Smith decided that this could not be done, but decided that she might be adopted into the family of the Prophet Joseph Smith as a servant, which was done, a special ceremony having been prepared for the purpose. But Aunt Jane was not satisfied with this, and as a mark of her dissatisfaction she applied again after this for sealing blessings, but of course in vain.

Brother John Henry Smith remarked that it seemed to him that persons in whose veins the white blood predominated should not be barred from the temple.

THURSDAY, JANUARY 2, 1902 - Continued

President Smith, replying to this, referred to the doctrine taught by President Young which he (the speaker) said he believed in himself, to the effect that the children of Gentile parents, in whose veins may exist a single drop of the blood of Ephraim, might be all pure-blooded Gentiles excepting one, and that one might extract all the blood of Ephraim from his parents' veins, and be actually a full-blooded Ephraimite. He also referred to the case of a man named Billingsby, whose ancestor away back married an Indian woman, and whose descendants in every branch of his family were pure whites, with one exception, and that exception was one pure blooded Indian in every branch of the family. The speaker said he mentioned this case because it was in line with President Young's doctrine on the subject; and the same had been found to be the case with stockmen engaged in the improvement of breeds. Assuming therefore this doctrine to be sound, while the children of a man in whose veins may exist a single drop of negro blood, might be entirely white, yet one of his descendants might turn out to be a pronounced negro. And the question in President Smith's mind was, when shall we get light enough to determine each case on its merits? He gave it as his opinion that in all cases where the blood of Cain showed itself, however slight, the line should be drawn there; but where children of tainted parents were found to be pure Ephraimites, they might be admitted to the temple. This was only an opinion, however, the subject would no doubt be considered later.

Brother Clawson regarded this as an answer to the question and expressed himself satisfied with it.

EXTRACT FROM GEORGE F. RICHARDS' RECORD OF DECISIONS BY THE COUNCIL OF THE FIRST PRESIDENCY AND THE TWELVE APOSTLES. (No date is given but the next decision in order, Number 4, is dated February 8, 1907)

Number 3 - The descendants of Ham may receive baptism and confirmation but no one known to have in his veins negro blood, (it matters not how remote a degree) can either have the Priesthood in any degree or the blessings of the Temple of God; no matter how otherwise worthy he may be.

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 26, 1908

Letter read from Elder Ralph A. Badger, late President of the South African Mission, dated this city 17th Inst., asking in substance the following questions: (1) What shall be done where people tainted with negro blood embrace the Gospel, the writer going on to say that such people are very numerous in South Africa and some are now members of the Church whose children associate with those of the white race who are members of the Church, the latter objecting to this being done. (2) The writer wished to know if the Gospel should be preached to the native tribes, and states that an old native missionary had become a member of the Church at Queenstown, and is anxious to start an active missionary work among the natives; that the son of a Zulu chief had also been baptized who had requested that missionary work be done among the Zulus.

With reference to the first question President Smith remarked that he did not know that we could do anything more in such cases than refer to the rulings of Presidents Young, Taylor, Woodruff, and other presidencies, on this question, amounting to this, that people tainted with negro blood may be admitted to Church membership only. In this connection President Smith referred to Brother Abel, who was ordained a Seventy by Joseph Young, in the days of the Prophet Joseph, to whom

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 26, 1908 - Cont'd

Brother Young issued a Seventies' certificate; but this ordination was declared null and void by the Prophet himself. Later Brother Abel appealed to President Young for the privilege of receiving his endowments and to have his wife and children sealed to him, a privilege President Young could not grant. Brother Abel renewed his application to President Taylor with the same result, and still the same appeal was made to President Woodruff afterwards, who of course upheld the position taken by Presidents Young and Taylor. He later wrote to President Smith that he had received a patriarchal blessing under the hands of Father Joseph Smith, and he said he inferred that the blessing conveyed the idea that he was to be the connecting link between his race and those holding the priesthood. But notwithstanding the fact that he was a staunch member of the Church, Presidents Young, Taylor, and Woodruff all denied him the blessings of the House of the Lord. The same efforts he said had been made by Aunt Jane to receive her endowments and be sealed to her husband and have her children sealed to their parents and her appeal was made to all the Presidents from President Young down to the present First Presidency. But President Cannon conceived the idea that, under the circumstances, it would be proper to permit her to go to the temple to be adopted to the Prophet Joseph Smith as his servant and this was done. This seemed to ease her mind for a little while but did not satisfy her, and she still pleaded for her endowments. President Smith then remarked that if we take this position without any reserve and refer such people to the curse pronounced upon Cainan, giving them to understand that they are descendants of Cainan, that the curse has not been removed, and that all of his race are deprived of the rights of the priesthood because of the decree of the Almighty, and until the Lord sees fit to remove that curse it would be for them to content themselves with the privilege of receiving the First Principles of the Gospel, thereby enabling them to become members of the Church, and thereafter live righteous lives, which will bring them far greater salvation in the Kingdom of God than any other so-called Christian religion is capable of doing for them. And in closing the President added that where the priesthood may have been bestowed upon men tainted with this blood, in all such cases their ordinations must be regarded as invalid.

Brother Lyman said he fully endorsed this position, and remarked that whatever the Lord has in store for the negro race it must be received through obedience to the Gospel , and it will therefore be for them to receive the Gospel of repentance as circumstances may admit, and be satisfied with that portion of it, and prove faithful to it.

As an item of information, the truth of which however President Smith said he could not vouch for, although it had come to him through the late President Jesse N. Smith, who claimed that it had come to him indirectly from the Prophet, that Ham's wife was an adulteress, and that she went into the ark pregnant from the seed of Cain, and in that way brought that blood through the flood, from whom sprang the early inhabitants of Egypt. Also that Ham, finding that he was deprived of the rights of the priesthood, and becoming desperate in consequence of his condition, sought to emasculate his father and brothers and thereby usurp the rights of the priesthood for himself and posterity, which wicked attempt renewed and intensified the curse of God upon him and his seed, in that they should be deprived of the priesthood and become servants of servants forever.

President Winder moved that the Council endorse the former rulings of the First Presidency, which are the rulings of this Council. In connection with this motion it was understood that our Elders should not take the initiative in proselyting among the negro people, but if negroes or people tainted with negro blood apply for baptism themselves they might be admitted to Church membership in the understanding that nothing further can be done for them. It was also understood that the secretary was to get together the rulings of former councils on this question, also the public utterances of President Young and others on the same subject.

Motion put and carried.

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 2, 1908

On the question of negro blood, the secretary presented extracts from Council minutes, dated August 22, 1895, March 11, 1900, and extracts from Discourses by President Young, dated October 9, 1859, March 8, 1863, August 19, 1866, as follows:

PRESIDENT BRIGHAM YOUNG, OCTOBER 9, 1859:

You see some classes of the human family that are black, uncouth, uncomely, disagreeable and low in their habits, wild, and seemingly deprived of nearly all the blessings of the intelligence that is generally bestowed upon mankind. The first man that committed the odious crime of killing one of his brethren will be cursed the longest of any of the children of Adam. Cain slew his brother. Cain might have been killed and that would have put a termination to that line of human beings. This was not to be, and the Lord put a mark on him, which is the flat nose and black skin. Trace mankind down to after the flood, and then another curse is pronounced upon the same race - that they should be the "servant of servants", and they will be until that curse is removed, and the abolitionist cannot help it, nor in the least alter that decree. How long is that race to endure the dreadful curse that is upon them? That curse will remain upon them, and they never can hold the priesthood or share in it until all other descendants of Adam have received the promises and enjoyed the blessings of the priesthood and the keys thereof. Until the last ones of the residue of Adam's children are brought up to that favorable position, the children of Cain cannot receive the first ordinances of the priesthood. They were the first that were cursed, and they will be the last from whom the curse will be removed. When the residue of the family of Adam come up and receive their blessings, then the curse will be removed from the seed of Cain, and they will receive blessings in like proportion.

President Brigham Young, March 8, 1863:

Shall I tell you the law of God in regard to the African race? If the white man who belongs to the chosen seed mixes his blood with the seed of Cain, the penalty of the law under God is death on the spot. This will always be so.

President Brigham Young, August 19, 1866:

Why are so many inhabitants of the earth cursed with a skin of blackness? It comes in consequence of their fathers' rejecting the power of the holy priesthood. and the law of God. They will go down to death. And when all the rest of the children have received their blessings in the holy priesthood, then that curse will be removed from the seed of Cain, and they will then come up and possess the priesthood, and receive all the blessings which they are not now entitled to.

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 10, 1910 - Council Meeting

Letter read from President B. A. Hendricks of the South African Mission, dated October 4, addressed to President Rudger Clawson, stating in substance that a serious race question was confronting himself and associates, missionaries, on account of the doctrine having been taught to some of the negro saints that they could p erform certain ordinances in the House of the Lord, and he desired an answer to this question: "Is it possible for a promiscuously bred white and negro to be baptized for the dead?" adding that a great many blacks had become members

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 10, 1910 - Council Meeting - Cont'd

of the Church in South Africa, and were good, honest people. President Hendricks also stated that by asking this question he did not wish it to be inferred that he and his fellow missionaries were directing their work among the blacks, as they were not, he having instructed the Elders to labor among the white race.

President Smith remarked that he saw no reason why a negro should not be permitted to have access to the baptismal font in the temple to be baptized for the dead, inasmuch as negroes are entitled to become members of the Church by baptism.

THE FOLLOWING IS TAKEN FROM THE BOOK "THE WAY TO PERFECTION", PAGE 106:

"Cain conversed with his God every day, and knew all about the plan of creating this earth, for his father told him. But, for the want of humility, and through jealousy, and an anxiety to possess the kingdom, and to have the whole of it under his own control, and not allow anybody else the right to say a word, what did he do? He killed his brother. Then the Lord put a mark upon him ***** When all the other children of Adam have had the privilege of receiving the Priesthood, and of coming into the Kingdom of God, and of being redeemed from the four quarters of the earth, and have received their resurrection from the dead, then it will be time enough to remove the curse from his posterity. He deprived his brother of the privilege of pursuing his journey through life, and of extending his kingdom by multiplying upon the earth; and because he did this, he is the last to share the joys of the Kingdom of God. - J.D. 2:142-143.

The Lord said: "I will not kill Cain, but I will put a mark upon him,"and that mark will be seen upon the face of every negro upon the face of the earth; and it is the decree of God that the mark shall remain upon the seed of Cain until the seed of Abel shall be redeemed, and Cain shall not receive the Priesthood, until the time of that redemption. Any man having one drop of the blood of Cain in him cannot receive the Priesthood; but the day will come when all that race will be redeemed and possess all the blessings which we now have. - History of Wilford Woodruff, P. 351.

Why are so many of the inhabitants of the earth cursed with a skin of blackness? It comes in consequence of their fathers' rejecting the power of the Holy Priesthood and the laws of God. They will go down to their death. And when all the rest of the children have received their blessings in the holy priesthood, then that curse will be removed from the seed of Cain, and they will then come up and possess the Priesthood. - J.D. 11:272.

(Taken from The Way To Perfection", Page 107.)